



EmployeeUPDATE

Our Mission: To serve the people of North Carolina by enabling individuals, families and communities to be healthy and secure, and to achieve social and economic well-being.

A monthly publication for employees of the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services

Two from DHHS get top employee award

Evelyn Foust

Evelyn Foust, head of the N.C. HIV/STD Prevention and Care Branch, was presented a Governor's Award for Excellence for 2004 on Oct. 25 for outstanding service in state government. Foust is dedicated to the cause of

fighting HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases and making sure that patients are treated with dignity and respect.



Evelyn Foust

Foust partners with other state and federal agencies and with local agencies to work to combat HIV and STDs on the local, state and federal levels.

Leading North Carolina's effort to track HIV/STDs, Foust discovered an increasing trend of disease

in the state and across the South. She organized her colleagues in 13 southern states to form the Southern AIDS Coalition and to develop an action plan. She co-authored the *Southern States Manifesto* documenting the need for combating HIV/STDs and led efforts to educate legislators in Congress and in southern states, including North Carolina, of the need for more funding to educate the public, combat the epidemic, and provide medication for those living with AIDS.

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Gwen Skinner

A long-time Caswell Center employee has been tapped for one of state government's highest honors. Gwen Skinner, utilization review coordinator for the past 19 years, is one of this year's recipients of the State Employees' Awards for Excellence.

Skinner received her award at a ceremony held in Raleigh on Oct. 25. DHHS Secretary Carmen Hooker Odom made the presentation.

"I am most appreciative and honored by this award," Skinner said. "There are so many of my fellow employees here at Caswell Center who are equally deserving of such an award. I am truly honored that I was selected out of so many for this recognition."

As Caswell's Utilization Review coordinator, she is responsible for ensuring that the resident records are in compliance with Medicaid regulations. She compiles and distributes Medicaid records reviews and follows up with the appropriate Caswell Center staff to assure that any compliance issues are resolved.



Gwen Skinner

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A new acute HIV detection program, STAT (Screening and Tracing Active Transmission program), developed under her leadership, helped identify an outbreak of HIV disease among North Carolina college students in 2003-2004. She established the “Project Commit to Prevent” program to educate and engage students in the most affected schools and supported a three-day “Stomp Out HIV/STD” conference for student leaders. This effort has become a national model. She also successfully lobbied and secured \$700,000 in additional annual funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to address college outbreaks. She won leadership awards for focusing on HIV in the Latino population.

Foust began her career with the state as a Public Health disease control specialist based in Mecklenburg County. In 1987, she was promoted to Public Health program consultant in the HIV Branch in Raleigh and in 1988 became a PH disease control supervisor. She was named PH program coordinator in 1991, and was promoted to the position of branch head in 1994.

She says a pivotal moment in her life was the first time she had to tell a client that his test results were positive for the virus that causes AIDS. “He was exactly my age at the time – 25 years old – and just like me except for risk behaviors,” Foust said. “At that time, in the early ‘80s, people with AIDS died within two to three years – we didn’t have the medications we do now. I felt incredibly helpless.

“I realized then that this was a disease affecting my generation – that young people can die if we neglect public health. I dedicated my career then to doing something about it, to keeping the public educated and informed, and ensuring that people with HIV and AIDS get the care and services they need,” she said.

“I’m incredibly honored by this award because I’m being recognized for doing what I love,” said Foust. “And I feel tremendously lucky to be working alongside Secretary Carmen Hooker Odom, Dr. Leah Devlin, Dr. Steve Cline and my truly great HIV/STD branch staff, trying to make a difference in the everyday lives of people. Life couldn’t get any better.

“Thanks to medical advances, AIDS is no longer a death sentence. My goal for the next 10 years of my career is to reinvest in prevention so people don’t get HIV/AIDS in the first place. It would be fabulous to find a vaccine to prevent AIDS and drugs to actually cure it. I believe it’s possible that there doesn’t have to be AIDS for the next generation – for my children and others,” Foust said.

The governor’s award program was created 22 years ago to acknowledge and express appreciation for outstanding accomplishments by state employees. It is the highest honor that a state worker can receive for noteworthy service to the government and people of the state of North Carolina. ■

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“Gwen is a great and gracious lady who exemplifies the finest qualities we expect in an employee of the state of North Carolina,” said Caswell Director Beverly Vinson. “This recognition is richly deserved. We are proud of her.”

Equally proud of Skinner and her recognition is her former boss and the current director of the Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Substance Abuse Services, Mike Moseley.

I’ve known Gwen for nearly 30 years, most notably in the six years I served as director of Caswell Center, and she routinely demonstrated on a daily basis the highest personal and professional qualities of a devoted and dedicated co-worker,” Moseley said.

“A person of compassion, faith and spirit” is how her coworkers describe her. Known for her many volunteer services, she has a special affinity with her local Relay

for Life organization for cancer research. Herself a cancer survivor, Skinner works as a volunteer with her local chapter. She was also instrumental in the development of the Greene County interfaith program, which was organized in the aftermath of Hurricane Floyd’s devastating floods in 1999.

“I have a passion for those who live here at the Caswell Center, for my fellow coworkers, and a passion for community work,” she says. “I feel my purpose and place is to try to help others where I can.”

She is a member of Calvary Memorial Methodist Church in Snow Hill, where she serves on the Pastor-Parish Relations Committee. She is chairperson of the United Methodist Women’s Circle and volunteers with the church’s youth group. She works in the Sunday school, nursery and as a lay reader. She also works as a classroom tutor in the local school system as part of her church’s outreach ministry. ■

Award recognizes group for reducing health disparities

Pitt Partners for Health is the first recipient of the Charles Blackmon Leadership Award for the Elimination of Health Disparities from the N.C. Office of Minority Health and Health Disparities and N.C. Healthy Carolinians.

The award, presented in October, was accompanied by a \$1,000 check to help further the work of PPH, which works through the faith community to reduce diabetes among African Americans in Pitt County.

This annual award recognizes Healthy Carolinians Partnerships that have demonstrated leadership and success in reducing health disparities through community health improvement initiatives.

Working with the community to identify the problem and develop solutions, Pitt Partners for Health established a Diabetes CARE Project in Cornerstone Missionary Baptist Church. They screened more than 2,500 people

for diabetes and identified 60 percent as at-risk, provided diabetes education and follow-up services, established and equipped wellness centers in local churches, trained more than 50 lay health advisors to reach at-risk citizens in local churches, and set up a fund to pay for medications for economically disadvantaged people with diabetes. This successful project is now moving out to 15 additional African American churches in Pitt County.

The award honors Charles Blackmon, former chair of the Governor’s Task Force for Healthy Carolinians (1999-2003) and a long-time public health advocate. Blackmon provided leadership and vision in the establishment of the state’s 2010 health objectives and focused attention on reducing health disparities, especially in relation to race/ethnicity, income, education and ability. He was also a member of the Justice Warren Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention Task Force and worked to reduce tobacco use in the state. ■



Jalil Isa
*¡Salud y
Saludos!*

Vaccine shortage affects Hispanics

The word has been getting out on the latest flu vaccine shortage to audiences all across the country and throughout our lovely state. When news about this severe shortage that had befallen the nation hit the presses a few weeks ago, we quickly scrambled to put together a campaign warning people about the importance of getting vaccinated only if you're in a high-risk category. So far that message seems to be getting massive airplay.

DHHS has had many campaigns in the past and is experienced with getting the word out on various health issues. There was also a visible effort in trying to get the word out to the Latino community throughout the state. While there's a good chance that many of the state's young and healthy Hispanic population would never have gotten vaccinated, there was another aspect to this campaign message: if you fit in certain categories, you should do all you can to find a vaccine. One of those categories includes people who take care of, or live with, a new-born less than six months of age. In a situation like

that, those caretakers are strongly urged to do what they can to get vaccinated. And with the higher birthrate of Hispanics as compared to non-Hispanic whites, chances are better that your young healthy Latina/Latino will have a newborn in the home. This being the case, we want them to be vaccinated.

To that end, as soon as news broke that we'd be getting only about half of the vaccines we once were anticipating, we began contacting the Spanish language media. My emphasis became getting the word out on the need for Hispanics to understand that 1) there was a shortage of flu vaccines; 2) we didn't want most people getting vaccinated; and 3) there were some people we *did* want getting vaccinated. I focused on informing parents of young children about the need for their kids – or themselves if they take care of infants less than six months – to get vaccinated. Luckily, there were funds available to invest in getting radio commercials frequently played on popular Spanish-language radio stations. I visited a couple of the stations and personally recorded the spots. Some of the spots are being distributed statewide to various Spanish-language radio stations. The word will hopefully get out on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's guidelines.

Regrettably, Hispanics already have a very low rate of health insurance coverage. Because of this, there is often little likelihood they will get vaccinated even when there is no shortage. Hopefully, this crisis will provide even more awareness on the subject of immunization. People may have to walk away from their local health department or doctor's office without having gotten a shot in the arm. They'll also be walking away realizing the value of having a flu shot, especially for those who fall in a high-risk category. ■

Jalil

Purple Shoes exhibit represents victims of domestic violence

The North Carolina Purple Shoe Memorial Exhibit brought its message to the lobby of the Albemarle Building in Raleigh during early October. The display helped raise public awareness for victims of domestic violence. It proved to be visually alluring, drawing the curious to examine up close. A brief look drove home the horrific reality. Each table setting, each pair of shoes – women's, men's and children's – represented someone who died as a victim of domestic violence in North Carolina.



Shoes in the lobby of the Albemarle Building form table settings that tell the story.

The memorial consists of a pair of purple shoes honoring each woman who was a homicide victim. Children's shoes represent each murdered child and men's shoes memorialize men including law enforcement officers, who were killed in a domestic violence - related homicide. Each pair of shoes includes information on name and age of the victim, date of death, weapon used and perpetrator's name.

Victims of domestic violence, or people who have friends or relatives in violent domestic relationships, may want to talk to the staff who are in charge of the exhibit. Trained staff is

always present at the exhibit. The exhibit is a powerful yet respectful means of educating our state about domestic violence. For more information about the Purple Shoe Memorial and the list of exhibit dates and times please contact Danielle Hill, executive director, Safe Space of Franklin County, at 919-497-5599.

The Family Violence

Prevention and Services Program in the Division of Social Services developed the Purple Shoe Memorial in 2003 to accomplish just that – a visual public awareness campaign about domestic violence in our state. Safe Space of Franklin County, in Louisburg, hosted the exhibit, which honors each victim of a domestic violence homicide, as reported to the North Carolina Coalition Against Domestic Violence. In 2002 there were 74 domestic violence homicides in the state, and in 2003 there were 71.

Two sworn to homeless panel

The North Carolina Interagency Council for Coordinating Homeless Programs (ICCHP) received two new members last month, with the additions of Gene Bell of Asheville and Tina Quiller-Morgan of Raleigh. The two were appointed by Gov. Mike Easley and sworn by Judge Robin Hudson of the N.C. Court of Appeals during an ICCHP meeting Oct. 13 in Raleigh. Bell, director of maintenance and construction at the Housing Authority of Asheville, is serving a term that expires in April 2006. Quiller-Morgan, a budget analyst with the N.C. Office of State Budget and Management, is serving term that expires in April 2007.



Gene Bell, left and Tina Quiller-Morgan take oath from Judge Robin Hudson

The ICCHP is an advisory group created by executive order in 1992 to advise the governor and the secretary of the N.C. Department of Health and Human Services on issues affecting people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. The council is charged with providing recommendations for joint and cooperative efforts to better meet the needs of the homeless residents of North Carolina. The ICCHP is staffed by the Office of Economic Opportunity within DHHS. In addition, a homeless policy specialist, Martha Are, works with the council and its member agencies on

special initiatives aimed at ending homelessness in North Carolina.

The ICCHP consists of 28 members who are appointed by the governor and represent non-profit agencies serving the homeless; county and city government; the private sector; the state departments of Administration, Commerce, Correction, Cultural Resources, Health and Human Services, and Public Instruction; the Community College System; the N.C. Housing Finance Agency and the North Carolina General Assembly. A seat on the Council is also reserved for a homeless and/or formerly homeless person.

The ICCHP sponsors its annual conference on homelessness Nov. 30 - Dec. 1. This year's conference is "Getting There from Here: Mapping Solutions To End Homelessness In North Carolina." As part of the conference, discussion will center on developing 10-year plans to end homelessness for the state and its communities.

Five servings a day



Kids at Alderman Elementary show off their fruit hats they made as part of the USDA Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program kickoff.

USDA visitor emphasizes more fruits, vegetables

Recent federal legislation authorized funds to offer free fresh fruits and vegetables to students during the school day. North Carolina is one of three new states selected by the U.S. Department of Agriculture to participate in that Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program. On Sept. 16, Eric Bost, undersecretary of USDA Food & Nutrition Services, visited Alderman Elementary School in Wilmington to kick off the program in North Carolina.

In North Carolina, 77 percent of high school and middle school students do not eat the recommended minimum of five servings of fruits and vegetables per day, according to the 2003 Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System. Targeted to elementary school children, the USDA Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program ensures that over 11,000 North Carolina elementary school students will each eat at least one extra serving of fruit or vegetables each school day and get a healthier start in life.

USDA funds will be distributed through the N.C. Department of Public Instruction's Child Nutrition

Program to 25 local elementary schools, which will purchase and serve fresh fruits and vegetables as part of the school breakfast, lunch and snack programs.

DHHS staff Alice Lenihan, Nutrition Services branch head, and Diane Beth, N.C. 5 A Day coordinator, participated in this landmark event. Other dignitaries from USDA and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) also attended.

Eating more fruits and vegetables is one of the most important health habits that

North Carolinians can do to improve and maintain their health.

For more information about this national program see the USDA's Report to Congress at www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Research/FV030063.pdf. For more information on how to Eat Smart and Move More, visit www.eatsmartmovemorenc.com.



From left to right: Diane Beth, NC DHHS/DPH; Ron Vogel - Deputy Administrator for Special Nutrition Programs USDA; Brenda Lisi - Special Assistant to the Under Secretary USDA; Eric M. Bost - Under secretary for Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services USDA; Lynn Hoggard, NC DPI; Alice Lenihan, NC DHHS/DPH.

Common thread reaches way beyond Caswell Center

NASA astronauts in an undersea test lab have something in common with residents of Caswell Center in Kinston. It is improved personal comfort and health, thanks to scientifically engineered fabrics produced by a local company.

Domestic Fabrics Corporation came to Kinston in 1969. As a leader in textile research and development every step of production, including new design and fabric research, is conducted locally.

Two patented fabrics that are produced by Domestic are “Health-Mesh” and “Wick A’Way.” Both of these are constructed using an antimicrobial yarn that Domestic spins from an antimicrobial fiber produced by Foss Manufacturing Company. The Foss process incorporates a silver-based agent into fibers in a way that provides permanent, safe and effective protection against many different fungi and bacteria, helping to reduce the spread of infection. These special fabrics are essential for the health and safety of some of Caswell Center’s residents. They are used in sheets and thermal blankets, oversized washcloths, adapted collars for meals, and for making adapted clothing for those who need the benefits of the specialized fabric.



Caswell Center Laundry supervisor Diane Early is a strong advocate of Health Mesh bedding. Nearly 500 people live at Caswell Center and that’s a lot of laundry! Pointing to a snag in a sheet she explained, “Wheelchairs often make holes in bedding, but with these blankets there is no unraveling or further tearing...”

Diane Early, supervisor of the Caswell Center laundry, reports that the Health-Mesh sheets and blankets “hold up even with 2-3 washings a week in extremely hot water. They don’t shrink and they don’t run when the fabric gets punctured.”

They also survive wheelchair snags without unraveling or tearing, allowing the Center to reap a savings on linen costs since 1999.

The comfort level of these fabrics is also a factor in their use. Not only does the fabric reduce skin shear, but in the case of Wick A’Way, it takes moisture away from contact with the skin.

JoAnn Phillippee, who designs and makes specialized clothing for individuals who live at Caswell Center, says “This material works very well for people who get overheated or perspire heavily...it protects their skin and helps in the healing of skin conditions.” Phillippee works in the Caswell Occupational Therapy department, creating special designs for individual needs. “I’m now making nightgowns with this fabric, and it is working.”

This summer, NASA astronauts worked as “aquanuts” by using the fabrics in hydrolab tests for 10-day missions on the ocean floor. According to Bill Hunneke, domestic fabrics vice president, NASA is also “testing fabrics with the antimicrobial yarn for possible use on the international space station.”

So, products that are created and manufactured in Kinston are being used to improve life for residents at Caswell Center and for people who are exploring new frontiers in our oceans and in space. For more information, contact Joanne Richiutti at Caswell Center, (252) 208-3778, or Bill Hunneke at Domestic Fabrics, (252) 527-0042.



Domestic Fabrics’ Fred Hunneke and JoAnn Phillippee in the Caswell Center Occupational Therapy department smile as they hold up a successfully adapted t-shirt made from Wick A’Way fabric. Phillippee is using the same fabric to create nightgowns for individuals at the Center.

an Over NEWS CLIPS

News clips will keep you informed

Feel like you don't always know the latest news about DHHS? Or maybe you don't feel that you are up-to-date on issues and stories that may relate to your job.

DHHS Public Affairs assembles clips from more than 100 newspapers, journals, magazines and television Web sites daily to keep you abreast of the latest news being reported about us.

This daily offering is available to you at www.dhhs.state.nc.us/clips/. Clips are updated workdays between 10 a.m. and 11 a.m.

So don't curse the darkness, light a candle! Add www.dhhs.state.nc.us/clips/ to your favorite links and get in the habit of knowing the latest news about DHHS. ■

Adoption Profile

Introducing Sylvester

A sweet, loving and funny little boy, Sylvester sometimes shows a slightly mischievous side. He is an adorable boy with good manners.

Sylvester is a very social child who speaks to everyone. He loves being around other children and has lots of friends. He is currently taking drum lessons and thoroughly enjoys playing them. Sylvester has also shown a talent for drawing.

Sylvester will attend the Exceptional Children's Preschool to assist with his growth and development and allow him the attention he needs to be successful. Speech classes at school are helping his articulation and he has made good progress. Sylvester can better comprehend information and directions if they are repeated for him several times. He needs to learn better social skills with other children when things don't go his way.



*Sylvester
b. Sept. 8, 1997*

A Family for Sylvester...

Due to his developmental delays, Sylvester needs a patient family willing to devote a lot of time and attention to him and his needs. He also needs a great deal of interaction and stimulation. This adorable little boy is sure to bring immense joy to the family that commits to loving him, nurturing him and seeing that he receives whatever services or help he might require.

For more information on this child or adoption and foster care in general call NC Kids Adoption and Foster Care Network toll free at 1-877-NCKIDS-1 (1-877-625-4371). ■